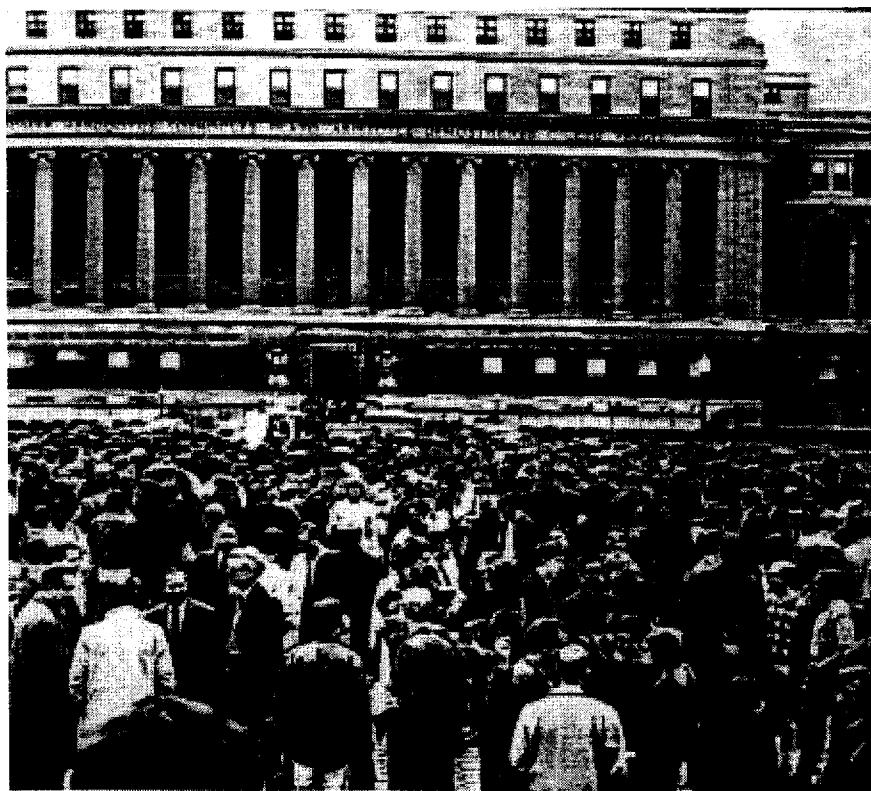


SDS / WUO is an insightful look at Students For A Democratic Society (SDS) and the Weather Underground Organization (WUO), two important political organisations in the history of the american white left. It points out their contributions while not glossing over their mistakes and weaknesses. SDS grew to become a large white radical student movement against the Vietnam war in the sixties, while the WUO, a splinter group of SDS, tried to move "from protest to resistance" by carrying out clandestine actions against U.S. imperialism from 1970-76.

Written by a participant, the author David Gilbert was a member of the Columbia University chapter of SDS in New York City and was a key participant in the large student strike and occupation of 1968. He joined the WUO when it was formed and continued as a member till its collapse in 1976. He has been a political prisoner since the failed Brinks expropriation in 1981 by a unit of the Black Liberation Army.

Includes first WUO communique, and SDS/WUO chronology.



 **Arm The Spirit**

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SDS / WUO

Students For A Democratic Society and the Weather Underground Organization



David Gilbert

more from David Gilbert

Looking At The White Working Class Historically



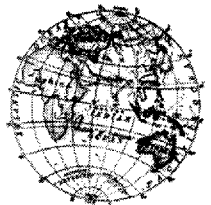
David Gilbert
with comments by J. Sakai

Looking At The White Working Class Historically

Political prisoner David Gilbert exposes the myth of the white working class as the vanguard of revolution in America and reveals the reactionary roll it plays in the U.S. imperialist machine, while pointing to the possibilities of reorganising this section of the population into the revolutionary movement. With comments by J. Sakai, author of *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*.

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AIDS CONSPIRACY THEORIES



David Gilbert

AIDS Conspiracy Theories: *tracking the real genocide*

by political prisoner David Gilbert with commentary by various comrades, including the late BLA Prisoner of War Albert Nuh Washington. An exposé of the right-wing, racist agenda behind conspiracy theories concerning the origin of AIDS.

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SDS / WUO

Students For A Democratic Society
and
Weather Underground Organisation

David Gilbert

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support for activists facing state repression, its refusal to provide military aid to other armed groups (despite repeated requests), it's hostility to the women's movement and much more throughout Weather's existence.

November: Five Weather members are arrested on conspiracy charges to bomb the offices of California State Senator John Briggs. It is later revealed that the Revolutionary Committee and PFOC had been deeply infiltrated and the arrests came about as a result of this infiltration. From this point on the Weather Underground ceases to exist.

1979

November 2: The Revolutionary Armed Task Force (RATF), a BLA unit allied with white anti-imperialists, liberates BLA POW Assata Shakur from prison.

1980

July: Former Weather Underground member Cathy Wilkerson surfaces in New York City. She is charged with possession of explosives arising out of the 1970 townhouse explosion. She is later sentenced to 3 years imprisonment.

December: Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn surface in New York City.

1981

October 20: A failed expropriation of a Brinks truck by the RATF results in the capture of several BLA members and allies (some ex-Weather) and the death of BLA soldier Mtayari Shabaka Sundiata. This effectively results in the end of the BLA. A number of white anti-imperialists (some ex-Weather) regroup and carry out several bombings under the name Red Guerrilla Resistance between 1982 and 1985 but by the spring of 1985 most of them were captured by the state and the organization never carried out another action.

Sources: Weatherman by Harold Jacobs; The Weather Eye: Communiqués From The Weather Underground, May 1970 – May 1974, edited by Jonah Raskin; False Nationalism False Internationalism: Class Contradictions In The Armed Struggle by E. Tani and Kae Sera; The Way The Wind Blows: A History Of The Weather Underground by Ron Jacobs and assorted documents and pamphlets...

front cover photo: demonstration against the Vietnam war
courtesy Roz Payne Archives www.newsreel.us

back cover photo: Columbia University, New York City student strike 1968

September 4: The Weather Underground bombs the Kennecott Corporation in Salt Lake City, Utah for its mining operations in Chile which helped prop up the Pinochet regime and aided in his seizure of power.

1976

January 30- February 2: PFOC organizes the Hard Times conference which is attended by over 3,000 people in Chicago. This too, is part of Weather's inversion strategy by using the conference to build their aboveground organization under their leadership. This party-building attempt was a complete failure. The organizers were relentlessly criticized by many different forces for their racism and sexist politics that was part of their new line on class.

February 1976: The Bay Area chapter of PFOC issues the statement "*Class And Revolutionary Politics*" which refutes the political line of the Weather Underground that was put forth at the Hard Times conference and supports Weather's critics at the conference.

Spring-Summer: The Weather Underground splits into two groups, one based around the old leadership of the Central Committee and another called the Revolutionary Committee. The split centers around issues of race, gender, class and organizational strategy. The Central Committee and its supporters eventually begin to surface, while other rank and file members side either with the Revolutionary Committee or stay underground and move on to other armed formations.

1977

February 3: The Revolutionary Committee of the Weather Underground Organization claims responsibility for the bombing of the Immigration and Naturalization Service offices in San Francisco, California.

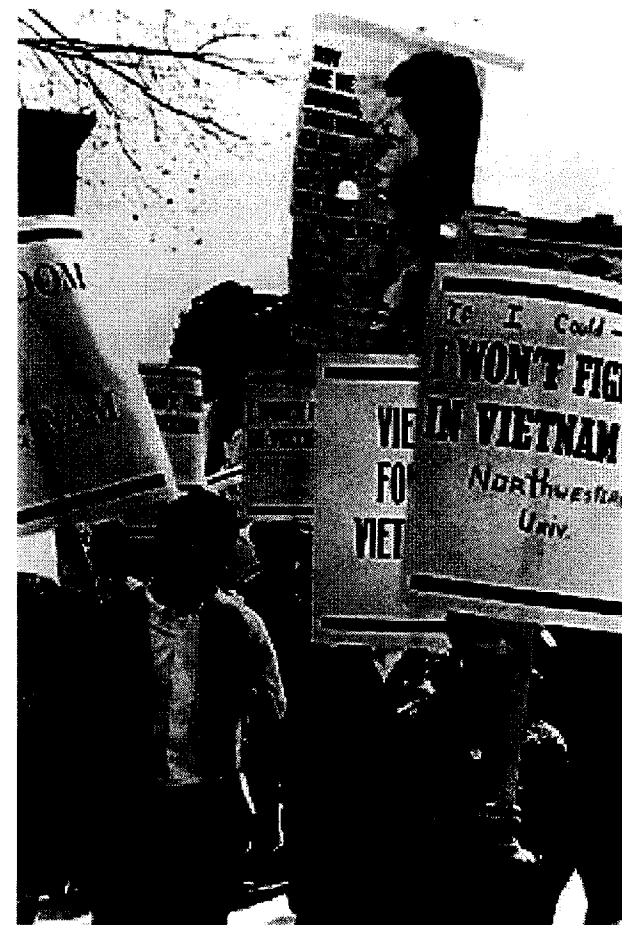
February: First issue of Prairie Fire Organizing Committee's magazine *Breakthrough* is published.

Spring: The John Brown Book Club compiles various articles critical of the old Weather leadership and subsequent split in a pamphlet called "*The Split Of The Weather Underground Organization: Struggling Against White And Male Supremacy*"

September 1: The George Jackson Brigade, an armed formation based in the Seattle area, issues an open letter criticizing Weather and its aboveground support formations after the split for its lack of

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These revised essays were originally written for ONWARD newspaper, a journal of anarchist news, opinion, theory, and strategy of today. They were published in the spring and summer 2001 issues respectively. David Gilbert was a comrade and Brinks Trial co-defendant of the late New Afrikan anarchist and Black Liberation Army soldier Kuwasi Balagoon who died of AIDS in prison 1985 (check out the book of his writings published by Solidarity). David has since pioneered AIDS education programs in New York state prisons, and has worked closely with various anarchist, anti-authoritarian and other aspiring revolutionary formations and individuals through the years. More recently, he worked on TIME ENOUGH!, the 2002 Political Prisoner calendar with Black Liberation Army political prisoners Herman Bell and Seth Hayes, and the calendar committee in Montreal. He is currently working with Arm The Spirit-Solidarity on a book anthology of his prison writings to be released over the next year. Previously published pamphlet editions include "Aids Conspiracy Theories: Tracking The Real Genocide", "Looking At The White Working Class Historically". David continues to write, struggle, and mentor youth activists while serving out his life sentence, in effect a death sentence for the crime of being a revolutionary, freedom fighter and his solidarity to the Black Liberation Movement. Support David Gilbert and the over 100 other political prisoners and prisoners of war locked down in the U.S. prison system.

"We are neither terrorists nor criminals. It is precisely because of our love of life, because we revel in the human spirit, that we became freedom fighters against this racist and deadly imperialist system."

From David's court statement September 13, 1982 after his arrest.



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by many sectors of the left. While it re-affirms Weather's anti-imperialist roots, covering many liberation struggles around the world it also is the beginning of Weather developing a working class political line which they had previously rejected. While their anti-imperialist politics remain solid, their new class line begins to show a reversion to traditional settler Marxist-Leninist class politics. In retrospect many see this as the beginning of the Weather Underground leadership's process of *inversion* in which they slowly begin to abandon armed struggle and start a process of surfacing as a legal political organization.

Fall: A documentary produced by the Weather Underground with radical filmmaker Emile d'Antonio called *Underground* is publicly released.

September 11: The Weather Underground bombs Anaconda Corporation (part of the Rockefeller empire) for its role in helping Pinochet seize power in Chile and it's continuing economic support of the regime.

October: The Weather Underground publishes the first issue of its magazine *Osawatamie*.

1975

January 29: The Weather Underground bombs the USAID section of the State Department in Washington, D.C. Another bomb in Oakland at an office of the Department of Defense doesn't detonate.

Spring: The Weather Underground publishes "*Politics In Command*", their new political-military strategy which furthers the line of building a legal, aboveground organization and beginning to minimize the role of armed struggle.

June 16: The Weather Underground bombs a branch of Banco de Ponce in support of a strike by workers in Puerto Rico at Ponce Cement.

July: Over a thousand women attend the Socialist Feminist Conference at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio in which Weather supporters attempt to play a major role.

July 11-13: The first national conference of the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee (PFOC) takes place in Boston. PFOC essentially becomes the aboveground support formation for Weather.

provided sanctuary by Weather cells while she was underground because of non-Weather related bombings in New York City. When she decided to surface she denounced Weather, armed struggle, etc.

September 11: In a coup, aided by the CIA, the Chilean military under the leadership of General Augusto Pinochet overthrows the democratically-elected Socialist government of President Salvador Allende. Thousands are arrested, tortured and imprisoned and hundreds are "disappeared".

September 19: Weather member Howard Machtinger is captured by the FBI in New York City.

September 28: In response to the coup in Chile, the Weather Underground bombs the ITT Headquarters for Latin America

October 16: Weather member Howard Machtinger jumps bail and returns underground. He releases a letter explaining his reasons.

1974

February 4: The Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) kidnaps Patty Hearst, heir to the Hearst publishing fortune.

February 20: The Weather Underground issues a communiqué concerning the SLA's kidnapping of Patty Hearst.

March 6: The Women's Brigade of Weather bombs the Federal offices of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). In the accompanying communiqué the Women's Brigade argues for the need for women to take control of daycare, healthcare, birth control and other aspects of women's daily lives.

May 4: Six members of the SLA die in Los Angeles after a massive shoot-out with police when the house is set on fire.

July 13: The Weather Underground bombs the executive headquarters of Gulf Oil in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The accompanying communiqué details Gulf Oil's involvement with the Portuguese colonial regime in Angola as well as its activities in countries such as Vietnam. It also covers Gulf's role in profiting from the ongoing energy crisis.

July 24: The Weather Underground publishes *"Prairie Fire: The Politics Of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism"*. The book is well received

Read These Essays!

by Meg Starr, in collaboration with Matt Meyer

One of the problems facing activists today is that, as the African proverb says, "Until lions have their own historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunters." When we start trying to put our own sense of fury and urgency about social change in a context of movement history, our perspectives are too often warped by the same propaganda and racism that directs most U.S. media. As we fight against our government's corrupt relationship to people of color here and abroad, against corporate exploitation or capitalist destruction of the world environment, against police brutality and the gulag of the prison industrial complex, we also struggle to understand what similar efforts have been waged against the empire. What lessons are there to be learned from past organizations and individuals? On whose shoulders do we stand?

The following essays were written at Attica penitentiary between "count," lights-out and forced labor assignments. They seek to escape from the revisionist histories widely available, and to give a militant, thoughtful, critical but unrepentant insiders viewpoint. For those who believe that true democracy includes the vast majority of the worlds people having control over their own fate, their own economic and political resources, read these essays. For those who are struggling for peace with justice, read these essays. For all those committed to the concept that another world is possible, and who want to construct that world on solid ground, read these essays today.

Many more comprehensive and professional-looking materials than this one have been produced about the 1960's and 1970's. But there are profound problems with the way most of them treat the two organizations about which white anti-imperialist political prisoner David Gilbert writes. Mainstream SDS histories highlight the early civil rights and anti-war work, and down-play the later critiques of the U.S. empire, or SDS's solidarity with the Black Panthers (BPP) and other liberation movements. They treat as trivial it's escalating resistance as the war in South East Asia intensified, and U.S.-based campaigns for justice were met with increased repression. The diversity and power of movements of people of color inside the boundaries of the U.S., like the American Indian Movement, the Chicano/Mexicano movement or even the Black Power Movement, is barely acknowledged. The savage Counter

Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) of the FBI is only explained in terms of white activist's direct experience of it. What some white activists witnessed happening to youth of color is often omitted. The effect of Chicago BPP leader Fred Hampton's being shot in bed while asleep, or the children of Vietnam being burned alive, are rarely painted into the picture. A natural consequence of this kind of treatment is to then dismiss the development of the WUO as a fringe organization with fanatical and ineffective politics, instead of seeing it as a political trajectory which grew naturally out of the experiences of many sincere radicals of that time. As a radical experiment, it was connected to the type of experiments youth around the world were attempting in order to challenge the passivity of the old communist parties. It was an effort to respond to escalating racism, repression, and war.

We live at a moment when state repression around the world is being intensified once again. Historically in the U.S., there have been many efforts for progressive movements to protect themselves from state and populist far-right repression. The WUO only joined a long history of groups attempting to raise the stakes, to put one's life where one's rhetoric had been, and to work in clandestinity at a time of unprecedented governmental violence. This history, which we often overlook or view in a confused way, includes the Underground Railroad; Nat Turner, John Brown, and the many rebellious anti-slavery groupings; the underground elements of the mass labor movement and Communist Party of the 1920's and 1930's; the Molly Maguires; scores of draft resistance and draft evasion movements of almost every U.S. war; the Iroquois fighters in King Phillip's War; the Deacons of Defense, the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Black Liberation Army; the American Indian Movement (AIM) security patrols; the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, the Macheteros and the Armed Forces of National Liberation. Since the early 1970's, we should neither forget nor overlook the efforts of the Jane Doe Abortion Underground, or the Sanctuary Movement, or Earth First! Whether engaged in armed actions or in principled nonviolent struggle, these are but a few examples of a long and intense tradition. All of these efforts need to be re-evaluated. There is no need to glamorize any one form of action, or point fingers morally at another, without recognizing the woeful sectarianism and immaturity that has prevented our left from building a flexible mass movement that has more than one generation's experiences at its center.

Since Seattle, there have been many discussions about racism in the "newer-than" new white left: the anti-globalization and corporate responsibility movements. Anti-racism trainings are on an upsurge. While conditions are very different today than when SDS and WUO

Corrections in San Francisco and the Office of California Prisons in Sacramento.

September 9-13: An uprising takes place at Attica State Penitentiary in New York state where 9 guards are taken hostage and one of the yards is taken over. On the 13th Governor Rockefeller orders an armed attack on the prison yard in which 30 prisoners and all 9 guards are killed by gunfire. The remaining prisoners are brutalized for weeks after when the prison is retaken.

September 17: In response to the Attica massacre, the Weather Underground bombs the offices of the Commissioner of Corrections in Albany, New York.

October: Weather bombs the Massachusetts Institute of Technology offices of Vietnam war architect McGeorge Bundy.

1972

May 19: The Weather Underground sets off a bomb in the Air Force wing of the Pentagon following the mining of harbours in North Vietnam and the U.S. Force bombing of Hanoi.

December 2: The Justice Department issues new indictments against Weather.

December: In what becomes known as the Christmas Bombings, the U.S. Air Force carpet bombs Hanoi and other parts of Vietnam.

1973

January 27: A ceasefire agreement between the U.S. and Vietnam is signed in Paris. Nonetheless the war still continues.

February 23: The Weather Underground issues the *Common Victories* communiqué in which they analyze the new ceasefire agreement between the U.S and North Vietnam as well as the anti-war movement past and present.

May 18: A Weather cell attacks the 103rd Precinct of the NYPD in response to the murder by a cop of a 10-year-old Black youth.

July 24: Women from the Weather Underground release a *Collective Letter To The Women's Movement* attempts to engage the women's movement in debate around feminist politics and how it relates to other struggles and to denounce Jane Alpert who was temporarily

public radio. During the phone call Newton expels Cleaver and the International Section of the BPP (in exile in Algeria) and both exchange threats against each other.

January: The Panther 21 write an open letter to the Weather Underground in which they offer comradely criticism of Weather's "*New Morning - Changing Weather*" communiqué and urge them to continue waging armed struggle.

February 28: In response to the invasion by U.S. troops and massive B-52 bombings in Laos, a Weather cell bombs a section of the U.S. Capitol Building.

April 24-May 6: Massive anti-war demonstrations and riots take place in Washington, D.C. which see over 12,000 people arrested.

May 1: Weather Underground releases a statement concerning the arrest of Leslie Bacon who has been arrested as a suspect in the Capitol bombing.

May: After 26 months the Panther 21 trial ends in the acquittal of all defendants.

April: The Black Liberation Army (BLA) is formed and begins armed struggle, primarily as a response to police terror and murder. Other factors contributing to the BLA formation are the split between the Oakland-based (Newton-Seale) leadership and the New York City branch, the expulsion of BPP members who favoured armed struggle as opposed to the increasing reformism of the Oakland-based leadership and BPP members who wanted to begin armed struggle as part of liberating the five states in the south-east U.S. (the Republic of New Afrika).

August 18: Heavily armed Jackson city police and FBI launch raids against PG-RNA residences in Jackson, Mississippi. A shoot-out takes place and a police lieutenant is killed with another wounded. RNA members eventually surrender and 11 are subsequently imprisoned and charged with murder and Federal conspiracy charges. The raid is part of an ongoing government assault against the RNA in the south.

August 21: George Jackson assassinated at San Quentin prison.

August 30: In response to the murder of George Jackson, the Weather Underground bombs the California Department of

were created, those organizations developed a particularly strong solidarity with people of color, as an explicit goal of much of their program work. Their mistakes and successes arising from efforts to be faithful allies of the Black Panther Party, the Vietcong, and other movements should prove useful today. Respect for the desire of many of the most radical organizations of color to work autonomously, led both SDS and WUO to focus on trying to respond to directions from people of color communities and movements, attempting to mobilize other whites as allies.

Even on the left, many voices speak to us from a white-centered and privileged view point. A consistent element in David's writing is that he never loses track of the world that is majority people of color and poor. The real world. He never loses sight of the power generated by movements of people of color, pushing back against global capital control. He is not a white-centered historian; he is an anti-racist, an anti-imperialist in the truest sense of the word.

In 1965, David Gilbert was the founding chairman of the Columbia University Committee Against the War in Vietnam, and a founding member of the Columbia SDS chapter. In 1967, he wrote the first national SDS pamphlet defining "the system" as U.S. imperialism. He participated, as noted, in the Columbia strike of 1968; he joined the underground resistance in 1970. He was busted as part of the infamous "Brinks" case of 1981. In prison, David has developed a model AIDS peer education program for prisoners, and worked on a New York State legal case related to prison overcrowding. He also continues his anti-imperialist political work as a writer, and he continues to analyze the complex realities which surround us all; his history itself inspires.

One story to illustrate: David was sent as a representative of the Columbia Strike Committee to a faculty meeting, during the famous 1968 campus take-over. "I was questioned," he later wrote, "Would the strikers abide by a democratic vote of the entire campus community as to whether to end the strike? Torn by their definition of 'democracy' and the fundamental principles of the strike, I stammered out an answer: We believe in democracy, we will abide by the result of a vote . . . as long as the people of Vietnam and Harlem can vote too."

Another story, to give a small sense of the often-overlooked personal side of a man who has incorporated the feminist ideal that "the personal is political" into his daily practice and thinking and writing. John O'Reilly, a member of my own Resistance in Brooklyn collective, wrote this upon first meeting David: "I handed the slip of paper to the guard, showing him the name and number of the prisoner

I was to meet, and he gave me a seat number. As I approached the seat I had been appointed, I saw a man sitting across from it. He had thick glasses and, as he looked up at me, he smiled. I introduced myself and, as I sat, he shook my hand and he moved closer into the table and bridged the width of the table by leaning across it. The feeling I had at this time is hard to describe. David sends out so much warmth and compassion that whatever intimidation I had felt left me. David has an amazing ability to share space in a conversation. He is very aware of whether or not people are engaged, and also in whether someone is dominating the conversation. When all of the visitors were required to leave, I walked to the end of the hall and turned back to see him before I went into the next room. He smiled and raised his fist. David's strength at that parting was very helpful for me, because I felt so powerless in not being able to take him with me. We had connected. I had made a new friend and I desperately did not want to leave him there."

It is important for us to say that some day we will not leave behind David, and the almost 100 other political prisoners in U.S. jails. We can and must envision the tide of the political movement turning, the way the Puerto Rican political prisoners and their supporters put forth a vision and began an international and very grassroots campaign to make that vision come true. David and his comrades - coming mainly from the Black/New Afrikan liberation movements, the Puerto Rican and Chicano/Mexicano movements, the AIM and other organizations can and must be released. We must envision and organize for their homecoming. Knowing his and our history, learning honestly from that history, is a vital part of this process.

Meg Starr is a founding member of Resistance in Brooklyn (RnB), an anti-imperialist collective located in that subversive southern section of New York City. She is also an educator, author, mother, and when pressed-admits to holding degrees in history and women's studies. Matt Meyer, also a member of RnB, can be reached, along with Meg, at <mmsrnb@igc.org>.

September 15: The Weatherman underground issues its fourth communiqué announcing they have helped Dr. Timothy Leary escape from prison in San Luis Obispo, California. Leary issues a major statement from the underground after his escape from prison.

October 5: The Weatherman underground once again bombs the Haymarket police statue in Chicago.

October 8: The Weatherman underground issues a communiqué entitled "Fall Offensive" which calls for armed resistance in response to the escalating attacks and assassinations by the U.S. government internationally and against revolutionary forces such as the Black Panthers, militant anti-war protesters, etc. Early in the morning of the 8th they bomb the Marin County Courthouse and in another communiqué dedicate the action to the resisting prisoners in Soledad prison and the New York state prison system and in particular to Jonathan Jackson and Angela Davis. In a separate communiqué they issue a message to peace activist Daniel Berrigan after his capture by the FBI.

October 9: The Weatherman underground bombs the Criminal Courthouse in Long Island, New York in response to a five day uprising and seizure of the "Tombs" by prisoners including some of the Panther 21.

October 14: The Proud Eagle Tribe of Weather (later renamed the Women's Brigade of the Weather Underground) bombs the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University. This attack was carried out in reaction to the arrest of Angela Davis and was the first action undertaken by an all-women's unit of Weather.

December 6: Weather issues a communiqué entitled "New Morning - Changing Weather" in which they criticize earlier "errors" and tone down their rhetoric around armed struggle. They attempt to orient themselves to the counter-culture by promoting what they see as positive aspects in the hippie scene.

December 16: Judy Clark arrested is arrested on the Days of Rage indictments in New York.

1971

January: The growing split in the BPP (partly manipulated by the FBI's COINTELPRO program) becomes public as a taped phone call between Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver is played on U.S.

Cambodia. Within hours demonstrations break out across the U.S. and on many college campuses.

May 4: After several days of protesting at Kent State University in Ohio (including the burning of the ROTC building the night before) against the U.S. invasion of Cambodia, National Guard troops are sent on to the campus. After repeated confrontations, the National Guard opens fire, killing four and wounding several others. As a result, protests increase exponentially across the country and on May 14, two Black youth are killed at Jackson State College in Mississippi. Six Black civil rights protesters are killed in Augusta, Georgia.

May 21: The Weatherman underground issues its first communiqué, "A Declaration Of A State Of War".

June 10: The New York City police headquarters is bombed. Weatherman takes credit in its second communiqué from underground.

July 23: Thirteen Weatherman are indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of conspiring to engage in acts of terrorism and sabotage against police stations and other institutions.

July 25: The Weatherman underground issues communiqué #3, "Honk America", in response to Justice Department indictments.

July 26: A Weather cell bombs a MP station at the Presidio Army Base in San Francisco.

July 27: A branch of the Bank of America is bombed in New York for which Weather takes credit.

August 7: Jonathan Jackson, younger brother of imprisoned Black revolutionary George Jackson, enters the Marin County Courthouse, California, in an attempt to liberate his brother and 2 other prisoners named the Soledad Brothers because they had been charged with the murder of 2 prison guards at San Quentin prison. They weren't in the courtroom on that day, so Jonathan takes the judge and several jurors hostage and passes out guns to 3 Black prisoners present (Ruchell Magee, James McClain and William Christmas). As they leave in a van from the courtroom's garage they are ambushed by San Quentin prison guards and other law-enforcement officers who riddle the vehicle with gunfire. Jackson, McClain, Christmas and the judge are killed.

Introduction

We study the past to draw lessons to help us liberate the future. Today's young activists are to be commended for showing much more interest than my 1960s generation did in learning from earlier movements. Still, I want to alert you to two characteristic errors in such study.

1) In looking at victorious revolutions in other countries, we mechanically applied lessons from far more advanced levels to our own embryonic stage.

2) In looking at past U.S. struggles, we saw errors as mainly the result of wrong ideas in the heads of the leaders of the day. Thus, we implicitly flattered ourselves as outstanding individuals who would naturally be more principled and intelligent. This approach way underestimates the material forces – such as the depth of white supremacy or the repressive powers of the state – that produce repeated errors.

This brief two-part history is neither detailed nor definitive. It is written by a participant and partisan, with the goal of contributing to today's struggles.

David Gilbert

August 29-September 1: A three day mass meeting was held in Cleveland to build support for the upcoming SDS National Action, during which Bill Ayers gave a major speech.

September 3: Weatherman action in Pittsburgh organized and led by women.

September 24: The "Conspiracy 8" trial opens in Chicago. A violent Weatherman action takes place outside the courthouse, resulting in 19 multiple felony arrests of Weatherman members.

October 8-11: The SDS National Action takes place in Chicago. The Weatherman "Days of Rage" result in the arrest of hundreds of Weatherman activists and major felony indictments, both local and federal, against Weatherman leaders.

October 29: Bobby Seale is gagged during the "Conspiracy 8" trial.

December 4: Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark murdered by Chicago police.

December 27-30: Weatherman "National War Council" takes place in Flint, Michigan.

1970

February: The majority of the Weatherman faction goes underground to begin preparations for guerrilla warfare. In late February, a Weather cell in New York City firebombs the house of Judge Murtagh who is presiding over the Panther 21 trial.

March 6: In a Greenwich Village townhouse in New York, an accidental explosion occurs in which Ted Gold, Diana Oughton, and Terry Robbins are killed.

April 3: Twelve Weathermen are indicted by a federal grand jury on 13 counts (one count each for crossing state lines intending to incite a riot and one count of conspiring to do the above).

April 15: Linda Evans and Dianne Donghi are arrested by the FBI in a set-up by a Weather infiltrator, Larry Grathwohl.

April 30: U.S President Nixon announces the invasion of Cambodia by U.S. Armed Forces and South Vietnamese (ARVN) troops in an attempt to root out NVA and NLF forces who have bases in eastern

all U.S military bases, including the massive Marine base at Khe Sanh, are attacked and the U.S. embassy in Saigon is seized (American troops retake it many hours later). After fierce fighting U.S. and ARVN forces beat back Vietnamese guerrillas which includes narrowly averting the overrunning of the Khe Sanh Marine base. Despite the defeat of the Vietnamese liberation forces, the Tet Offensive showed that the Vietnamese NLF is capable of coordinated national actions and able to inflict heavy losses on U.S. and ARVN forces. As a result, morale amongst U.S. troops plummets and desertions, mutinies and the fragging of officers dramatically increases.

1969

January: The BPP initiates its "Free Breakfast For School Children Program" in Oakland. This program will become the first of over 50 free social assistance programs organized by Panthers across the country and will become one of the strongest components of the BPP.

March: At the Austin, Texas, NC, the anti-PL forces reverse the PL resolution on racism passed the previous December. The SDS alliance with the Black Panther party is substituted for the overturned PL resolution. Internal differences are beginning to emerge within the group favoring the RYM resolution passed the previous December.

April 2: New York City police, in a coordinated raid, arrest 21 Panther members. They are indicted on a wide assortment of "conspiracy" charges where it is alleged they were planning numerous bomb and gun attacks across the city.

June 18-22: The SDS National Convention in Chicago witnessed the PL-SDS split. The RYM II statement is presented as a refinement of the original RYM resolution by the same people who had authored the original RYM proposal. The "Weatherman" statement ("You Don't Need A Weatherman...") also is presented by those who were to emerge as leaders of Weatherman. Weatherman is elected to control of the SDS National Office, with Jeff Jones, Mark Rudd, and Bill Ayers filling the top three positions.

Summer: SDS summer programs in Michigan and Ohio develop as proto-types of Weatherman collectives.

SDS

Students for a Democratic Society

The U.S. was rocked by widespread and tumultuous protests in the 1960s. SDS was the organization at the hearts of the radical movement among predominantly white college students. It drew special vitality from its close relationship to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the mainly Black youthful and militant civil rights group doing the most courageous field work in the South. SDS also became the spearhead for what became a massive movement against the war in Vietnam by organizing the first national demonstration against it on 4/17/65. Back then, it was unheard of to challenge "our" government's "foreign policy," so just to call for such a protest was radical, and the turnout of 20,000 people was very impressive. The work for that march also led to a defining break from SDS's parent organization, the League for Industrial Democracy, when



Demonstration against the war in Vietnam, 1965, Austin Texas, organized by the University of Texas chapter of SDS.

we defied their orders to exclude Communists.

SDS, founded in 1960, received its early definition from "The Port Huron Statement" of 1962. The core concept was participatory democracy: beyond electing leaders, people need to directly participate in discussing and determining the decisions that affect their lives, including in the economic sphere. The compelling issues were the Civil rights movement and peace (opposing the cold war and nuclear bombs). The defining early work of SDS, along with its alliance with SNCC, was the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP). Students went to live in poor communities to "build an interracial movement of the poor." While organizing success was limited, the experience was profound.

SDS hummed with a youthful vibrancy. Most of us rejected both red-baiting and the Soviet model of "socialism." Both red (communist) and black (anarchist) flags flew at our conventions. And we tried to apply participatory democracy to our own organization, with mixed results. The challenge to hierarchy felt liberating, even if often chaotic and inefficient. But there was a real problem of "the tyranny of structurelessness," where decisions are made in an informal and thereby unaccountable way.

The escalations of the war in Vietnam and SNCC's dramatic advance, in the summer of 1966, from civil rights to Black power posed new challenges and led to some tension between the old guard, steeped in ERAP, and newly activated student militants. SDS wasn't prepared for how the anti-war movement would mushroom, but did provide a radical and militant presence within the much broader coalition. SDS still naively defined the system as "corporate liberalism" as we grappled to put together our anti-racism and anti-war impetus with an economic critique.

The impact when the Black Panther Party burst onto the national scene in the fall of 1966 was electric. Their armed self-defense of their community from police brutality and their



Vietnamese prisoner

Government of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA). The RNA is comprised of 5 states in the southern U.S. which the participants consider the historic nation of the descendants of Afrikan slaves. The meeting which is held in a church comes under an armed police attack which is actively resisted against by the RNA members.

April 4: Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Mass rebellions break out in over 125 cities across the U.S.

April 6: Lil Bobby Hutton, the first member of the BPP, is shot and killed in cold blood by Oakland police. He is the first of many Panthers who will die in police shootings in the following years.

April-May: Columbia University is occupied by Black and White students. The demonstrators were able to close the campus in protests attacking University expansion into the Black community of Harlem, C.I.A. funded and supported research institutes and programs, and University subservience to the interests of large corporations. Mark Rudd, later to emerge as a major leader of Weatherman, becomes nationally prominent for his role in the Columbia revolt.

June: At the SDS National Convention in East Lansing, Michigan, PL can only muster a minority of delegates. Outright conflict develops between PL and the rest of SDS. The majority of the delegates at the convention stand up, raise their clenched fists, and chant "PL Out."

October: At the SDS Boulder, Colorado, National Council (NC) meeting a major PL-WSA resolution on student-labor action projects (known as the SLAP proposal) is rejected.

December: At the Ann Arbor, Michigan, NC, PL-WSA, demonstrates that it is gradually gaining ascendancy by winning passage of its resolution on racism. The RYM resolution, "Toward a Revolutionary Youth Movement," is passed. The resolution is presented by a group operating out of Chicago which included Mike Klonsky (then National Secretary of SDS) and Les Coleman (from Chicago Region SDS). It is supported by a number of people who later were to set up Weatherman, including Bernardine Dohrn, Jim Mellen, Mark Rudd, Bill Ayers, John Jacobs, and Howie Machttinger.

December 31: Vietnamese liberation forces launch the "Tet Offensive", a massive, coordinated military assault across southern Vietnam. Armed uprisings occur in almost every major city, virtually

areas of Oakland and begin armed patrols to challenge police harassment. BPP membership grows quickly and they begin to branch out into more community organizing.

December: SDS pushes radical draft resistance as the dominant thrust of its political organizing. It also calls on its campus chapters to protest or disrupt appearances of representatives of the military-industrial complex.

1967

April 25: The Panthers publish their first newspaper which was headlined "Why Was Denzil Dowell Killed?" and dealt mostly with police brutality. The paper was to become one of the most important organizing tools of the BPP.

June: At the SDS National Convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a "new working class" perspective is counterposed to the Progressive Labor party's stress on the industrial working class being the crucial agency of revolution.

October 28: Huey Newton is arrested and charged with the murder of an Oakland cop after 2 Oakland police attack and seriously wound him in an early morning incident. A campaign organized to free Newton quickly grows across the country and becomes a focal point of national BPP organizing.

1968

Spring: The student movement begins to use bombs for the first time and in the following years, several hundred attacks take place. At first they are used against symbols of U.S. militarism such as ROTC buildings and Selective Service offices. By 1969-70, they are being used against corporate offices, mainly those connected with U.S. imperialism such as Mobil Oil, IBM, General Motors, Chase Manhattan Bank and much more.

March 4: An FBI memo directs Bureau field offices to disrupt and stop the growth of "militant Black nationalist groups". This is the beginning of the FBI's COINTELPRO (Counter-Intelligence Program) strategy against the BPP and other leftist and revolutionary nationalist movements.

March 29-31: The Malcolm X Society organizes the Black Government Conference in Detroit, Michigan which is attended by over 500 Black nationalist leaders who form the Provisional



community self-help programs (free breakfast for schoolchildren, free clinics, free schools) provided a living example of revolutionary nationalism and self-determination for oppressed people. Several other revolutionary nationalist groups, all drawing on the teachings of Malcolm X, emerged in this period. At the same time, the first photos were published of Vietnamese children burned by U.S. napalm bombs – which drove us crazy about stopping the war. SDS slogan became "from protest to resistance," with a focus on draft resistance.

Meanwhile, the inspiration of the civil rights movement, the key and assertive work of women in it, and the problems of sexism within the left, all led to a re-birth of women's liberation. An early example was SDS's first ever all women's workshop at our 6/67 national convention. The air crackled with the energy and creativity the women generated. But their report to the plenary got a raucous reception – including catcalls and paper airplanes – from many SDS men. Given there had been little history of struggle, it isn't surprising that men were still very sexist, but such blatant hostility was shocking for an organization that prided itself on always siding with the oppressed. That debacle was an example of the problems that pushed many women to leave the "left" and contributed to an unfortunate tension between anti-imperialism and feminism, which weakened both. Many principled women – strengthened by the often unsung examples and leadership of women of color – continued to struggle on both fronts, but it took an Amazonian effort to do so.

A high tide of struggle crested in 1968, with the Vietnamese's powerful Tet offensive and over 100 ghetto uprisings in the U.S. after Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated. These events inspired SDS-led student strikes that shut down scores of colleges. We began to



name and analyze the system as "imperialism." Che Guevara's slogan of "2, 3, many Vietnams" pointed to how such a colossus could be overextended and eventually defeated. The Black rebellion was accompanied by militant upsurges of Native Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Asians in the U.S.

The government's response was a vicious campaign of disruption and violence, called COINTELPRO for counterinsurgency program (See *Agents of Repression* by Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall). More than 30 Panthers were killed in 1968-71, and over 1,000 were jailed. Many other groups and activists were attacked as well. While that level of repression generally wasn't used against whites, we did experience harassment, arrests and the threat of a wartime draft. More importantly, we identified with the Panthers and had vowed to stand by them. As rapidly as the movement had grown, we were still a small minority in white America. We had started out thinking all that was needed was to "shake the moral conscience of America." We now found ourselves confronting the most powerful government in world history.

Under this tremendous pressure, SDS split apart along the basic fault-line of the U.S. bedrock of white supremacy: between the desire for a potential majority base among white Americans and the exigent need for militant solidarity with Black and other third world struggles.

insurgent forces within forces within the civil rights, peace and student movements.

December: SDS sets up the Education Research Action Project (ERAP), consisting of local community organizing projects aimed at poor whites and blacks in ten Northern cities.

1964

March 12: Malcolm X publicly breaks with the Nation of Islam (NOI) as a result of the corruption within the NOI and his increasing political shift to the left.

June 4: Malcolm X forms the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

August 4: U.S. Naval ships are fired on by North Vietnamese PT boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. The U.S. responds with Air Force bombings over North Vietnam. What becomes known as the "Gulf of Tonkin" incident provides "justification" for the Johnson administration to increase U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. Decades later it is revealed that U.S. naval ships were not fired upon and the event was manufactured to justify the increased U.S. intervention in Vietnam.

1965

February 21: Malcolm X is assassinated at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem by members of the Nation of Islam.

April: SDS organizes the first national anti-Vietnam war march in Washington, drawing over 15,000 people, most of them students. In the following three months, the number of local chapters triples to well over 100 and the national membership of SDS grows to several thousand.

October: Carl Oglesby, then president of SDS, openly attacks corporate liberalism in a speech at an anti-war march in Washington.

1966

August: SDS National Convention at Clear Lake, Iowa, calls for a "student power" strategy and re-emphasizes the need to do political work on the campuses.

October: Huey Newton and Bobby Seale complete their 10 point program and form the Black Panther Party (BPP), an armed self-defense group in Oakland. They start to organize youth in the ghetto

Chronology Of The Students For A Democratic Society and The Weather Underground Organization 1960-1981

1960

February 1: Student sit-ins at integrated lunch counters are the beginning of a non-violent direct action movement to challenge the racist structures of U.S. southern society. This is the beginning of a growing new Civil Rights Movement that begins to actively challenge white supremacy.

Spring: Students for a Democratic Society founded.

April 16-17: The Student Non-Violent Coordinating (SNCC) is formed. SNCC is a multi-racial student group primarily based in the southern U.S. and involves itself in the Civil Rights Movement by organizing voter registration, non-violent direct action and more.

1961

May: The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) along with SNCC and other Civil Rights activists begin Freedom Rides which involve using buses with multi-racial teams of activists to challenge the segregated interstate transportation system. A massive racist backlash occurs and many buses are attacked, burned, etc. Passengers and supporters are attacked by racist mobs. This is part of an ongoing campaign by racist elements such as the Klan and other white supremacists who have been waging a violent terror campaign against the Black liberation movement which continues on in the years to follow. Much of this takes place with the complicity and support of various police agencies including the FBI.

1962

June: SDS issues 60 page *Port Huron Statement*, which calls for an alliance of blacks, students, peace groups, liberal organizations and publications - to bring about a progressive "realignment" of the Democratic party.

1963

June: SDS approves the document *America and the New Era*, which criticizes the inadequacy of the Kennedy Administration's New Frontier program to solve the problems of disarmament, social justice, and racial equality. As an alternative to collaboration with liberal groups, the document calls for the independent organization of emerging

One side (invoking a Eurocentric Marxism) said that revolution was about the working class, and used that as a left cover for retreat from fighting alongside Vietnam and the Panthers, claiming "all nationalism is reactionary." The other side (inspired by Marxist-led third world struggles) rightly saw solidarity with national liberation as a priority for any revolutionary movement worthy of that name. However, we wrongly abandoned efforts to organize significant numbers of white people, which also limited our base for anti-racist activism.

While the split moved along the horns of a real dilemma, there was a chance – although it certainly would have been difficult to achieve – for a larger and more working class movement base without pandering to racist trade union traditions. That strategy would have entailed reaching the growing youth rebellion with anti-imperialist politics, as well as allying with the emerging women's movement.

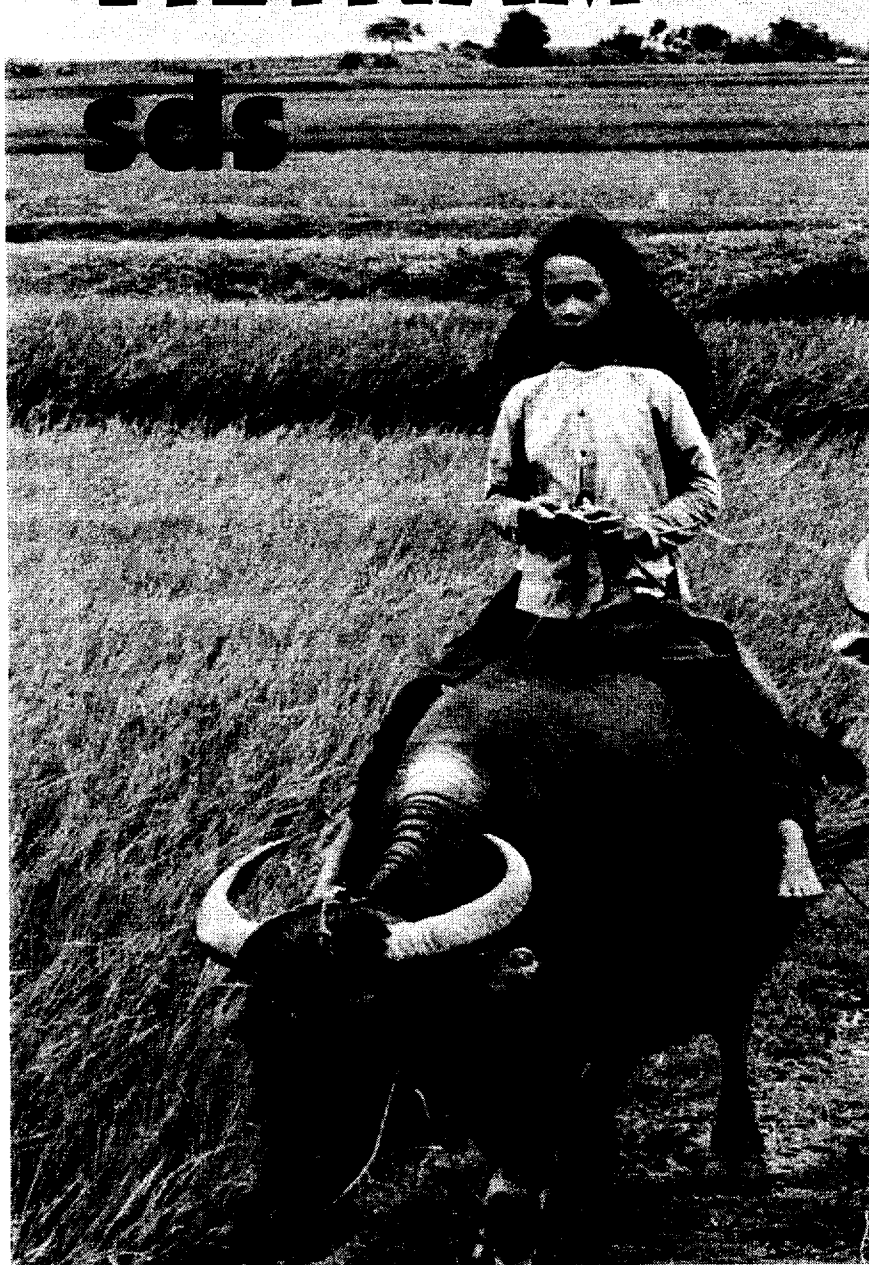
We were too overwhelmed by the stark life-and-death challenges, combined with our own inexperience and weaknesses, to implement such a strategy in practice. SDS splintered apart in 1969-70. One result was a series of formations that more or less reproduced the traditional white left opportunism toward the white working class. Another result was the Weather Underground Organization, an unprecedented, if seriously flawed group that carried out six years of armed actions in solidarity with national liberation struggles.



"scorched earth" policies carried out by U.S. marines

VIETNAM

SDS



peaceably under this system.

This was totally true of those who died in the New York townhouse explosion. The third person who was killed there was Terry Robbins, who led the first rebellion at Kent State less than two years ago.

The twelve Weathermen who were indicted for leading last October's riots in Chicago have never left the country, Terry is dead, Linda was captured by a pig informer, but the rest of us move freely in and out of every city and youth scene in this country. We're not in hiding, but we're invisible.

There are several hundred members of the Weatherman underground and some of us face more years in jail than the 50,000 deserters and draft dodgers now in Canada. Already many of them are coming back to join us in the underground or to return to the Man's army and tear it up from inside along with those who never left.

We fight in many ways. Dope is one of our weapons. The laws against marijuana mean that millions of us are outlaws long before we actually split. Guns and grass are united in the youth underground.

Freaks are revolutionaries and revolutionaries are freaks. If you want to find us, this is where we are. In every tribe, commune, dormitory, farmhouse, barracks and townhouse where kids are making love, smoking dope and loading guns - fugitives from Amerikan justice are free to go.

For Diana Oughton, Ted Gold and Terry Robbins, and for all the revolutionaries who are still on the move here, there has been no question for a long time now - we will never go back.

Within the next fourteen days we will attack a symbol or institution of Amerikan injustice. This is the way we celebrate the example of Eldridge Cleaver and H. Rap Brown and all black revolutionaries who first inspired us by their fight behind enemy lines for the liberation of their people.

Never again will they fight alone.

Weather Underground Organisation
May 21, 1970

Weather Underground Organization

Communique #1

Hello. This Bernardine Dohrn.

I'm going to read A DECLARATION OF A STATE OF WAR.

This is the first communication from the Weatherman underground.

All over the world, people fighting Amerikan imperialism look to Amerika's youth to use our strategic position behind enemy lines to join forces in the destruction of the empire.

Black people have been fighting almost alone for years. We've known that our job is to lead white kids to armed revolution. We never intended to spend the next five or twenty-five years in jail. Ever since SDS became revolutionary, we've been trying to show how it is possible to overcome the frustration and impotence that comes from trying to reform this system. Kids know that the lines are drawn; revolution is touching all of our lives. Tens of thousands have learned that protest and marches don't do it. Revolutionary violence is the only way.

Now we are adapting the classic guerrilla strategy of the Tuparmaros to our own situation here in the most technically advanced country in the world.

Che taught us that "revolutionaries move like fish in the sea". The alienation and contempt that young people have for this country has created the ocean for this revolution.

The hundreds and thousands of young people who demonstrated in the sixties against the war and for civil rights grew to hundreds of thousands in the past few weeks, actively fighting Nixon's invasion of Cambodia and the attempted genocide against black people. The insanity of Amerikan "justice" has added to its list of atrocities six blacks killed in Augusta, two in Jackson and four white Kent State students making thousands more into revolutionaries.

The parents of "privileged" kids have been saying for years that the revolution was a game for us. But the war and racism of this society show that it is too fucked up. We will never live

W U O

Weather Underground Organization

In a society where every single movie and TV program showed that the FBI "always got their man," the Weather Underground eluded capture and sustained armed action for six years. In white supremacist Amerika where historically just about every promising radical movement among whites (populism, women's suffrage, trade unionism) slid into compromising with racism, the WUO was known, at least at it's best, for solidarity with national liberation. In a world where "legitimate" governments bombed villages and assassinated activists but decried any armed resistance as "terrorist," the WUO carried out more than 20 bombings against government and corporate violence without killing anyone or so much as scratching a civilian.

The springboard for these advances was the historical context. The 60s and 70s were unprecedented in world history for the number of revolutions in a short time, as national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America overthrew colonialism and neocolonialism; it was also a high tide of Black and other third world struggles within the U.S. These events spurred growing radicalism among white people. The WUO was not formed as a narrow conspiracy but instead was a focal point within a much broader surge of anti-war militancy, as thousands of military buildings and Bank of America branches



Vietnamese militia woman

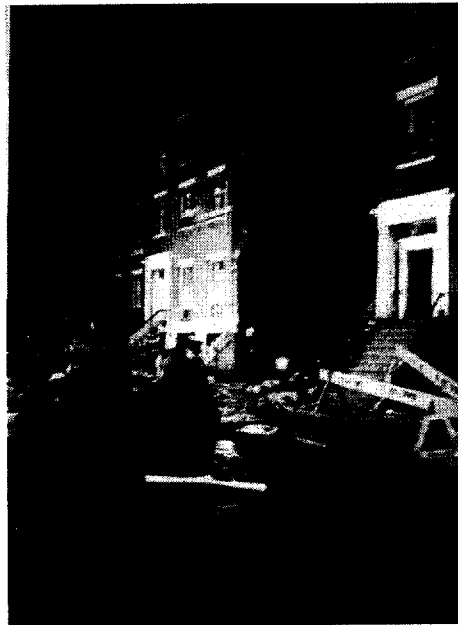
were burned to the ground and as hundreds of thousands of people joined demonstrations that broke government windows, disrupted meetings of bigwigs and resisted arrest.

Weather's exciting breakthroughs coexisted with costly mistakes. The earliest and most visible came during the first six months (late 69 to early 70), while we were still aboveground; our sickening and inexcusable glorification of violence, which grievously contradicted the humanist basis for our politics and militancy. We thereby handed effective ammunition to all who wanted to discredit our priority on third world struggles and our move toward armed struggle (AS). To this day, almost all "history" about the WUO makes the mania of those six months the whole story, without looking at our correcting of that error and the ensuing six years of solid and humane anti-imperialist action.

In my opinion, the basis for our early aberration was in the life-and-death crisis that split apart SDS. We were white middle class kids who – witnessing saturation bombings of Vietnam and the murder of the Black Panthers we admired – felt compelled to make the leap into AS. Instead of admitting our fear and inexperience and developing a suitable transitional strategy, we psyched ourselves up by glorifying violence and with macho challenges about individual courage. This frenzy was accompanied by basic related errors: 1) Sectarianism – a scathing contempt for all who wouldn't directly assist AS (the

sectarianism was mutual as most of the white left vehemently sought to discredit AS); 2) Militarism – making the military deeds and daring of the group all important rather than the political principles and the need to build a movement on all levels.

Early Weather's grave sins of commission were glaringly visible. The opposite movement sins of omission, that usually aren't even noticed, can be even more lethal. The terrible passivity of most of the white left to the early attacks on the Panthers gave the government



Townhouse explosion aftermath

from drifting back into the traditional failures of the white left, with the politics of the "multinational working class," and a plan to surface from the underground to be central to "leading" the "whole U.S. revolution." These positions negated the independent and leading role of people of color within the U.S. and at the same time undercut autonomous women's formations. When those forces sharply criticized us, we – with our vitality sapped by the lack of internal democracy – couldn't deal with it and instead split apart amid harsh recriminations.

The WUO was born in the era of the breathtaking rise of national liberation, in opposition to the U.S. foundation of white supremacy and on the heels of exciting movement victories met by fierce government repression. Our demise was also rooted in heavy historical realities: 1) COINTELPRO (along with internal weaknesses) had decimated the Black, Native and Latino leadership that had inspired progressive motion among whites; 2) our strongest base, the anti-war movement, shrank drastically after the U.S.'s 1973 withdrawal from Vietnam; 3) we didn't realize that we hadn't done nearly enough to develop anti-war consciousness into a deeper anti-racism and anti-imperialism.

In learning from history, we need to break from the mainstream culture that defines people as either purely "good guys" or purely "bad guys," which can lead to the self-delusion that getting certain basics down guarantees that everything else we do is right. The WUO made giant errors along with trailblazing advances. Hopefully both are rich in lessons for a new generation of activists.

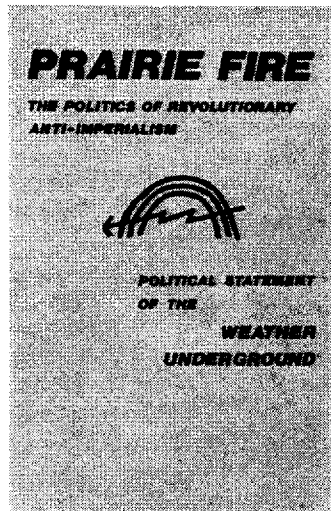


were moments when the FBI hunt was breathing down our neck, but popular support meant that information was kept from the state and instead flowed to the guerrillas.

Our stage of struggle was "armed propaganda," with no illusion of yet contending for military power. Instead, the purposes of actions were to: 1) draw off some of the repressive heat concentrated on Black, Native and Latino movements, 2) create a leading political example of white solidarity with national liberation, 3) educate about key political issues, 4) identify the institutions most responsible for oppression, and 5) encourage others to intensify activism despite state repression. We also provided examples of non-armed struggle (i.e. spray painting), pursued dialogue with the aboveground movement by writing to and reading responses in radical newspapers, and even developed our own underground print shop. We wrote and published the book *Prairie Fire*, a well-developed statement of the politics of revolutionary anti-imperialism.

The WUO's more than 20 bombings included the U.S. Capitol Building after the U.S. expanded the war in Indochina by invading Laos in February 1971; the NY State prison headquarters after the 9/71 massacre at Attica; and Kennecott Copper Company on the anniversary of the bloody 1973 coup against democracy in Chile. Every action was accompanied by a well-reasoned communiqué articulating the political issues. While there are no 100% guarantees, we placed the highest priority on avoiding civilian casualties, and fortunately succeeded.

The FBI never broke the WUO, but in 1976-77 we imploded from our own weaknesses. The downfall came



a signal that it would not face widespread political costs for proceeding with its full-fledged COINTELPRO campaign, which killed scores and jailed thousands of Black, Native and Latino activists.

Weather's militarism culminated in 3/6/70 when a frantic bomb-making effort, including anti-personnel weapons, resulted in an accidental explosion in a safehouse (known as the Townhouse explosion) that killed three of our own beautiful, young comrades. This tragedy set off intense internal struggle that resulted in a qualitative change to a more integrated use of AS to help mobilize and radicalize a potential mass base among white youth. Just two months later, young people poured into the streets over a million strong in angry response to the state's killing of four anti-war protesters at Kent State University, and student strikes occurred on nearly 1,000 campuses across the U.S. At the same time, the dire need for anti-racist leadership was painfully revealed by the failure to respond in a similar way when the police killed two Black students at Jackson State.

The WUO's recovery from militarism didn't magically put everything into perfect balance. While seeing a potential base in youth culture was right, we quickly repeated traditional missteps based in white supremacy. For example: 1) Our dearth of material aid for Black, Latino and Native armed groups (even underground, whites had much greater access to resources and faced much less danger of random police harassment); 2) To appeal to white youth, we endorsed "soft drugs" (pot and LSD), with little appreciation of drugs as a form of



National Guard at Kent State University

chemical warfare against the ghettos and barrios; 3) We failed to respond to the Panther 21's very constructive criticism of our initial backsliding on drugs and militancy; 4) There were subsequent moments of awful inaction, such as during the Native American occupation and government siege of Wounded Knee in 1973.

Not surprisingly, our other major internal weaknesses were based in sexism, heterosexism and class. Women's participation and percentage of leadership were very strong, but in practice, a woman had to be part of a heterosexual couple to be a top leader. We had little program around women's liberation, and we failed to make a serious effort for the needed alliance between anti-imperialism and feminism. Internal struggle on sexism was very inadequate, which dovetailed with a defacto homophobic culture. While many lesbian and gay comrades felt the strength to come out while underground, there wasn't real space for an affirming L/G culture; out L/Gs didn't make it to leadership positions; and we had no political program around L/G issues. Similarly, our middle class background meant we did a poor job at outreach to more working class sectors of youth.

There were related problems in our internal life. We embraced the theory of democratic-centralism; but in practice, the organization was



"The best thing that we can be doing for ourselves, as well as for the Panthers and the revolutionary Black Liberation struggle, is to build a fucking white revolutionary movement."

- Bernardine Dohrn



very hierarchical. Leadership tended to become manipulative and commandist, while cadre tended to curry favor with leadership. Criticism/self-criticism was used to compete and maneuver for power rather than to build people. While a strong organization was key to survival (and lone fugitives had a much harder time), that reality made social ostracism a potent bludgeon against political dissent. As far as I know, there is still no clear-cut successful model for combining the two critical needs of a fully democratic internal process and of tight discipline for fighting a ruthless state.

To me, a crucial lesson is that activists must consciously grapple with the powerful pull of ego that can lead us to put our own position and leadership above advancing the interest and power of the oppressed. Organizationally, we need to strive to live our political ideals – anti-racism, feminism, democracy, humanism – in our personal relationships.

Despite these serious weaknesses, six years of impressive successes resulted from what was right about anti-imperialism. Contrary to the spy movie mystifications that are all about sophisticated techniques and technology, our survival underground was based on popular support from radical youth and the anti-war movement. That was the key to solving needs such as ID, money and safehouses. There